



Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program

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Trip Report: Mali 23-26 June 2010

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Purpose: To participate in AEG/USAID/ Mali's Partners Conference and enhance collaboration with AEG projects, particularly the anchor program IICEM.

Sites Visited: Bamako, Mali

Description of Activities

On the first day of the conference we discussed substantive issues shaping partner project and overall AEG/USAID/Mali program success including gender priorities, performance monitoring plans, financial issues, and security. A significant portion of our time was spent in small group discussions learning from each other as we addressed issues of scaling-up. On the second day, our discussions focused on priority planning for the future in order to achieve the greatest sustainable impact on the greatest number of people. These discussions allowed us to better understand the contributions of our partners throughout Mali. During the conference, Jean Harmon, Director of the Office of Accelerated Economic Growth, USAID/Mali introduced the SANREM CRSP (supported by Washington office funding) as a full partner in their endeavors to attain sustainable agricultural development in Mali. The studies presented at the meeting have been shared on a flash drive and feedback is requested by August 15.

On Friday, Mamadou Doumbia (LTRA-8/Mali Coordinator) and I visited the offices of IICEM (Integrated Initiative for Economic Growth in Mali). John Lichte hosted us. Our discussion began with an introduction to SANREM CRSP activities globally, specifically our research focus on conservation agriculture as a means to provide smallholder farmers with tools to adapt to climate change which is particularly significant in Mali. Mamadou went on to describe our sites and the extent of implementation to date.

John introduced us to IICEM activities in Mali with a particular emphasis on agricultural investments. IICEM works with INTSORMIL in collaboration with Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG

2000) on upland water harvesting. They use tied ridges, but Mamadou noted that if done properly the *courbe de niveau* that the Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER) had been developing with the Soil Management CRSP was better adapted (requiring less labor and bunds).

In discussing the potential for collaboration with SANREM's focus on conservation agriculture, the only rotation that seems likely in the field crops (sorghum, millet or maize) would be with peanuts (a woman's crop). This could be interesting to pursue with respect to the gender implications: men's field crop and women's peanuts in the same field. However, this still does not resolve the problem of introducing a permanent cover crop.

Another interesting idea we discussed would be to collaborate with IICEM on women's horticultural crops to identify cover crops with the women that would serve to increase their incomes while increasing soil fertility. They are currently testing a legume from the Brazilians (white beans, could also use cowpeas?) as a rotation in the horticultural plots. Could we work with these trials and investigate the potential for scaling-up from women's gardens to men's fields?

INTSORMIL collaborates with the IICEM which provides credit for farmers to plant improved millet. Indeed, they are using project funds to multiply this improved seed. INTSORMIL does the technical backstopping. They have 2000 hectares of sorghum and up to 500 hectares of millet with SG2000.

IICEM is also doing agricultural land management and planning, specifically canalization with water pumps. This appears to be resolving the problem of having too many wells dug throughout the rice for off-season horticulture production fields in the Timbuktu region (because people were falling in the well holes when the fields were flooded during the rice season). Unfortunately, this poses problems because the canals degrade quickly. There is a strong need to improve water management so that the soil quality can improve. They are not doing any intercropping or rotation (except in Timbuktu where they are doing onions, shallots and potatoes in rotation with rice (SRI). The SRI has some success (5 ton/hectare (several conformations of field trials conducted by Erika Stieger). It improves output substantially in drier soils (water conservation and aerates the soil). They are incorporating compost.

Another very interesting opportunity revolves around working with the buffer zone of a Park in the southwest (complex Bugali). Apparently, a Monsieur Togula has a concession of 200,000 hectares (30 years) for carbon rights. His NGO, AID-SA is working with 27 villages. There is a need to reinforce agricultural production around the park. There is/was a livestock trail which traversed the park – this too may be an issue – they want to make a new path. John Lewis has been working through his organization Terra Global to make this a REDD zone. He is looking for help with the investments necessary to make this possible. SANREM has relevant community-based natural resource management experience with Malian partners in the Commune of Madiama. Combining this with the conservation agricultural practices to improve farm level productivity in these buffer villages may be highly advantageous for all stakeholders by providing improved smallholder incomes, strategies for adaptation to climate change, and biodiversity conservation all in one project.

Suggestions, Recommendations, and/or Follow-up Items

We need to keep in touch with AEG/USAID/Mali and the IICEM project so that we are ready and available to provide valued inputs into the planning and implementation of future agricultural development plans for Mali. The SANREM CRSP and, most specifically, LTRA-8 have an important role to play with respect to introducing and scaling-up techniques for smallholder adaptation to climate change that our research focus on conservation agriculture affords us.

List of Contacts Made:

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